

company of the Fuggers."²¹ Zwingli and Oecolampadius devised plans for the reorganization of the poor relief. Above all, the Peasants' War, with its touching appeal to the Gospel and its frightful catastrophe, not only terrified Luther into his outburst: "Whoso can, strike, smite, strangle or stab, secretly or publicly . . . such wonderful times are these that a prince can better merit Heaven with bloodshed than another with prayer" ; *^s it also helped to stamp on Lutheranism an almost servile reliance on the -secular authorities. In England there was less violence, but hardly less agitation, and a similar flood of writing and preaching. Latimer, Ponet, Crowley, Lever, Becon, Sandys and Jewel—to mention but the best-known names—all contributed to the debate.²⁴ Whatever the social practice of the sixteenth century may have been, it did not suffer for lack of social teaching on the part of men of religion. If the world could be saved by sermons and pamphlets, it would have been a Paradise.

That the problems of a swiftly changing economic environment should have burst on Europe at a moment when it was torn by religious dissensions more acute than ever before, may perhaps be counted as not least among the tragedies of its history. But differences of social theory did not coincide with differences of religious

opinion, and the mark of nearly all this body
of teaching,
alike in Germany and in England, is its
conservatism.

Where questions of social morality were
involved, men
whose names are a symbol of religious
revolution stood;
with hardly an exception, on the ancient
ways, appealed
to mediaeval authorities, and reproduced in
popular
language the doctrines of the Schoolmen. *•

A view of the social history of the
sixteenth century
which has found acceptance in certain
quarters has
represented the Reformation as the triumph
of the
commercial spirit over the traditional social
ethics of
Christendom. Something like it is of
respectable an-